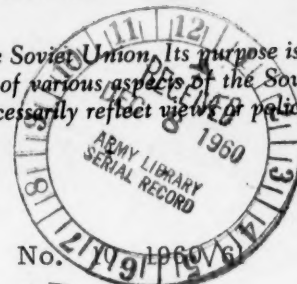


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Outline of Reference Paper On:

## AGRICULTURE AND THE FORTHCOMING CENTRAL COMMITTEE PLENUM

As the preparations for the December 13 Central Committee Plenum on agriculture are drawing to a close, there emerges a picture of unfilled quotas for farm products in the Seven-Year Plan. Symptomatic of the difficulties with the 1960 harvest has been the inability of the two chief Soviet grain suppliers--Kazakhstan and the Ukraine--to deliver to the state the amount of grain required by the plan.

Officially, the poor harvest is attributed to capricious weather--but this explanation is for the outside world only. The Soviet people are told that minor Party officials are to blame for the failures.

Judging from the Soviet press, inefficiency in harvesting methods is responsible for the hollow Soviet granaries: Estimates show that more than half of the grain was lost between the field and the flour bin due to careless handling by indifferent workers. Other workers deserted their virgin-lands assignments because of poor accommodations and cruel working conditions.

Indifference and tendencies toward private enterprise are an important reason for the low annual yields in the Soviet Union. Disillusionment is widespread not only among veteran kolkhozniki but also among the Soviet farm youth.

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## AGRICULTURE AND THE FORTHCOMING CENTRAL COMMITTEE PLENUM

The Communist Party Central Committee will convene on December 13 to discuss "the fulfillment of the state plan and socialist obligations for output of agricultural and livestock products in 1960 and the measures for the further development of agriculture" (Pravda, October 29, 1960). Judging from reports, the harvest has been poor and livestock deliveries have fallen short of the mark, jeopardizing the fulfillment of the Seven Year Plan.

Soviet statisticians have declared that it is still "too early to sum up the agricultural year. "Even preliminary figures are unavailable for the gross grain yield and for the fulfillment of plans for state grain purchases. Nevertheless, statements by Soviet leaders and oblique references in the press indicate that this year, as in 1959, both the grain harvest and livestock output have been disappointing. At the celebration held to mark the forty-third anniversary of the October Revolution, Party Secretary Frol Kozlov admitted that state purchases of grain this year would be "no less than last year. " Translated from Soviet officialese, the phrase means that such purchases will not exceed and may possibly be even less than those in 1959. It is difficult to believe that the Soviet leaders would agree to a smaller amount of grain to meet the state needs from a harvest bigger than or even equal to the meager yield in 1959. The 1960 gross grain yield will thus not exceed last year's 124,800,000 metric tons (SSR V Tsifrakh, USSR In Figures, Moscow, 1960, p. 161). According to the Seven Year Plan figures, the gross grain yield was to amount to 152,000,000 metric tons in 1960 (Ekonomika Selskoy Khozyaistva, Agricultural Economics, No. 3, 1960, p. 10). Hence the planned figure has been fulfilled by only 81.3 per cent.

The difficulties with the 1960 harvest are best illustrated by the failure of two leading suppliers of grain -- Kazakhstan and the Ukraine -- to supply the state by November 29 with the required amount of grain. Secretary of the Kazakh Komsomol Tasheyev has admitted that "the harvesting took place under difficult conditions" and that "a large harvest cannot be expected without early

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sowing" (Kazakhstanskaya Pravda, October 29, 1960). Unreliable weather is used by the Soviet leaders to explain away the poor harvest to the outside world; domestically, poor organization of the local Party officials and of agricultural personnel is blamed.

Judging by complaints in the Soviet press, inefficiency accounts for a large part of the harvest failure. Careful estimates indicate that more than half of the grain was left in the ears, fell into stubble, or was lost during threshing and transportation. Kazakhstanskaya Pravda on September 29 and 30 draws a sorry picture of harvesting in Kazakhstan. On the Ruzayevka Sovkhoz, Kokchetav oblast, for example, "the grain is cut too far from the ground, the sheaves are carelessly collected, much grain is left in the ears during threshing..." A check threshing showed that losses of grain per hectare (about 2.5 acres) amounted to 320 kilograms, or approximately 700 pounds. On the Dzhambul Sovkhoz, Akmolinsk oblast, much wheat perished in the rain. The grain taken to the delivery points was mixed with soil.

Efficiency in designating roads to the state grain delivery point is acidulously pointed out by the Kazakhstanskaya Pravda: they are strewn with grain. Komsomolskaya Pravda estimated on October 12, 1960, that a ton of grain per kilometer was lost on some roads in Kazakhstan. The Soviet youth organ sarcastically assured its readers that this grain was "not completely lost. Everywhere on the roads one can see persons with automobiles, wagons, and even simply with carts, collecting the grain... These are persons working privately. They 'store up' five to six bags every day and then sell the grain on the market."

A great shortage of manpower has been reported from the virgin lands this year despite Khrushchev's promise at the December 1959 Plenum to solve the problem. Tough working conditions, shortage of living accommodations, an overall drop in earnings, and lack of cultural amenities led to a mass flight of workers from the virgin lands. Even disciplined soldiers could not stand working conditions there (Krasnaya Zvezda, Red Star, August 23, 1960). Once again tractor drivers and mechanics had to be flown in from other regions of the country (Selskaya Zhizn, Farm Life, August 27, 1960), and the urban population rapidly mobilized for work on the fields. The shortage of manpower also meant that part of the harvest was lost to the snow or even to fire:

A reddish glow hangs for days and nights over the Kazakh steppe. The combines are followed by torch-bearers who set fire to the straw. Often sheaves which have not been harvested also catch fire (Selskaya Zhizn, October 14, 1960).

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In another part of the Soviet Union, in Omsk region (Western Siberia), harvesting is apparently continuing on snowed-under fields:

At present many farmers in the Bolshereche, Tara, and Muromtsevo regions are cleaning the snow from the sheaves, while the combines gather and thresh them... In the south of the oblast it is raining on the virgin lands. The rain drove the snow from the fields, but made the harvesting even more difficult (Izvestia, October 16, 1960).

Indifference and tendencies toward private enterprise are still another reason for the low annual yields, which barely exceed the per-hectare figures for pre-revolutionary Russia. In a Komsomolskaya Pravda article entitled "What Is the Millionaire Short of," a driver-mechanic on a "millionaire kolkhoz" gives some idea of the difficulties involved in kolkhoz output and of the unwillingness of the kolkhozniks to work for the state on what is ostensibly a showcase kolkhoz:

We are short of workers, of experienced persons who could work eagerly and with an understanding of the matter. And why?... Matters are particularly harmed by the fact that behind the plans and figures the individual is ignored on our kolkhoz (November 18, 1960).

Some idea of the attitude of these kolkhoz "millionaires" is provided by one woman's remark to her husband: "Go and work on the kolkhoz while I fatten up a couple of hogs to slaughter and sell them on the market-- I'll earn more than you." Such an attitude is widespread, especially among the youth: "To hell with everything, I'm out of the kolkhoz. I'll try my talents elsewhere" (November 18, 1960).

A new feature of this year's Plenum is that it is for the first time to check fulfillment of the so-called "socialist obligations," a pet project with the Party Central Committee ever since Khrushchev boasted of overtaking the United States in per capita output of livestock products. The Ryazan and Tula oblasts provide a good example of the manner in which the obligation can be distorted. The Ryazan Oblast Party Committee assumed in 1959 the obligation to produce three years' supply of meat in one year. The plan was fulfilled, and the government distributed medals. The Tula Oblast Committee then decided to emulate "the achievement of its neighbors" in 1960. All types of cattle were indiscriminately driven to the delivery points. By the second half of 1960, both Ryazan and Tula oblasts were lagging well behind in meat deliveries. Further, the number of cattle has dropped so much in the oblasts that future output is threatened. Izvestia complained:

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The figure was obtained not as a result of a detailed study of the capabilities of each farm. It was arbitrarily accepted. Any other figure could equally well have been named. The Rayon Committee and Executive Committee allotted tasks for each farm, and began to consider them socialist obligations (October 25, 1960).

As the newspaper pointed out, such obligations then become law. They are compiled not by the farmers themselves, but by "statisticians armed with calculating machines" (*Ibid.*). In order to fulfill such obligations farmers are ordered to drive to the meat combines "milch cows, sows in farrow... piglets, calves, bullocks weighing 140-150 kilograms. The bullocks were followed by breeding bulls which were sent for slaughter" (*Ibid.*). Soviet agricultural specialists can do little when faced by such practices on the part of the Party leaders: they can but warn about the future consequences for livestock output.

The Soviet press writes regularly about this situation. However, it only mentions individual cases, ignoring the overall picture. The failure to fulfill plans for the output of livestock products will be reflected in the country's reserves of foodstuffs and in the final figures for the Seven Year Plan as a whole.

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